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LITERARY SUPPLEMENT.

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**L O N D O N**

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## ANATOLE FRANCE AMONG THE ANGELS.

**"The Revolt of the Angels." By Anatole France. Lane. 6s.**

IN describing M. Anatole France's book as "very French" we intend to convey, although the words do not always convey, a compliment. An Englishman could not have written this book. It illustrates in a very marked manner the difference of the angle from which the two people regard life. The nimbleness of its wit, the originality and daring of its conception, the delicate beauty of its style are characteristically and inimitably French. And M. France wields gracefully a weapon which does not come naturally to the ordinary English writer. That weapon is irony. It is an essentially French product. It is in the very bone of French literature. English writers who use irony—and there have been some—do so at their peril. As a nation we neither understand nor appreciate it. Compatriots of Pascal, Renan, and Voltaire use it as to the manner born, secure in the knowledge that they will not be misunderstood. Irony is almost a synonym for immorality with the plain Briton.

"The Revolt of the Angels" is a book which is likely to be much misunderstood by the English novel-reading public, to whom this excellent translation of it is offered. To some it will seem flippant and heartless, to others blasphemous, while many will be found to condemn the author's lack of reticence in the treatment of sex and matter that many people regard as sacred. For M. Anatole France is ready with his gibes at all things in heaven and on earth, and will describe the secret workings of the Trinity with the same imperturbability that he will descant on the whiteness of the flesh of a woman.

Careless of opinion, acknowledging no control or authority, M. France flings his barbed arrows broadcast. He has a sneer for this religion, a bitter jest at the expense of another, and a cynicism for the social life of Paris that knows no bounds.

Leaving his high estate, Arcade, the Guardian Angel of one Maurice, a Parisian of means, thirsts for knowledge, the knowledge of the truth of the religion propounded by the Deity of the Heaven he has left. After reading countless musty and modern volumes and exhausting the library of Maurice's father—that famous library of the family of d'Esparieu—and incidentally aggravating the incipient madness of its delightful librarian, M. Sariette, he comes to the conclusion that his God is a fraud. Moving and living amongst the sons of men in Paris are hundreds of the Sons of God—angels of greater and less degree who for various reasons have taken up their abode on earth in the shape of men. Led by Prince Istar, a fallen Archangel who in his heavenly home ranked second only to the Seraphim, these angels plan and carry out a revolt against God in his holiest places, and are victorious.

But the book deals chiefly with their life in Paris, and there are some exquisitely satirical and humorous passages. The angel Theophile, who, for the love of a dancier at the music-hall, has laid aside his wings, shows them to Arcade, put away in a cupboard.

"You see," he said, "I have preserved them. From time to time when I am alone I go to look at them; it does me good." And he dabbed his reddened eyes. . . . Then holding the candle near the long pinions, which were moulting their down in places, he murmured, "They are eaten away". . . . "You must put pepper on them," said Arcade.

"I have done so," replied the angelic musician sighing; "I have put pepper, camphor, and powder on them. But nothing does any good."

Nectaire, himself once a highly placed Seraph, but now a gardener, unfolds the destiny of the world from

its beginnings in a discourse a little long-winded perhaps, but as broad and magnificent in its veins "as Bossuet's discourse on the history of the universe is narrow and dismal".

The book abounds in sayings wise and witty. Its frank, outspoken ideas and revolutionary doctrines show an extraordinarily wide knowledge and diversity of mind, while there are glints of genius revealed in its deep wisdom. M. France, for all his smiling gaiety, is deeply serious. He does not turn the fierce light of his raillery upon men and things merely to make a novel reader's holiday. His book should be read as a parable.

"Nectaire," says one of the fallen angels to another, "you fought with me before the birth of the world. We were conquered because we failed to understand that Victory is a Spirit and that it is in ourselves, and in ourselves alone, that we must attack and destroy Ialdabaoth."

## A ROMANCE OF MARS.

**"The Riddle of Mars." By C. E. Housden. Longmans. 3s. 6d. net.**

MARS is the fourth planet in order of distance from the sun and the next beyond the Earth. It is 4,200 miles in diameter, being only about twice the size of the moon, and not much more than half as large as our globe. The orb revolves round the sun in 687 days at a mean distance of 141 million miles. It was when watching the motions of Mars that Kepler made his great discovery of the ellipticity of the orbits of the planets. Mars rotates on his axis in 24 hours 37 minutes. His seasons resemble those of the Earth, except that they are twice as long; they are also modified by the marked elongation of the ellipse described by the planet.

Mars is distinguished from all the planets by his deep red colour and fiery aspect, being named after the Roman god of war. His brightness and apparent magnitude vary much at different periods; sometimes the orb is nearer to us by the diameter of the Earth's orbit—over 180 million miles—then he is in opposition, and comes within 47 million miles of our globe, and, rising about the time when the sun sets, surprises us by his magnitude and splendour. But when he moves to the other side of the sun, or to his superior conjunction, he declines to the dimensions of a small star.

The Earth, if viewed from Mars, would present appearances similar in many respects to those of Venus. It is the beautiful morning and evening star of the Martian skies, and, should there be poets on Mars, her splendours have doubtless been sung with the same ardour and rapturous enthusiasm that characterise the effusions of terrestrial poets when addressing the planet Hesperus.

Viewed with a powerful telescope, Mars is deeply interesting. Its surface is diversified with three shades of colour—reddish-ochre, greyish-green, and pure white. The latter is visible as two corresponding opposite patches. Each pole is surrounded by a brilliant white cap indicative of the presence of snow or ice such as occurs in our Arctic and Antarctic regions. Each cap has been observed to diminish in size as the summer advances, until only a remnant of it remains; but with the return of winter the cap again becomes prominent, and regains its former dimensions. These seasonal changes are nowhere else observed in the planetary system; they indicate the possibility of the existence of animated creatures not unlike those of this Earth. The visible melting of snow is a proof of the presence of water; it is therefore apparent that the green aspect of portions of the surface is due to the presence of seas and straits that intersect the land, the dull reddish colour of which seems peculiar to the soil.

The greater part of the land of Mars is in the northern hemisphere, of which it occupies about two-

thirds. This vast continent of orange hue is intersected in all directions by canals or waterways, forming what may be called a network of land and water. The canals run in perfectly straight lines for distances varying from 350 to 4,000 miles. Sometimes they are in duplicate, arranged in parallel lines at various distances apart. The canals always extend between two bodies of water, and are of different widths, the narrowest appearing like fine spider threads, and estimated to be eighteen miles across.

Mr. Percival Lowell writes: "Scattered over the orange-ochre groundwork of the continental regions of the planet are any number of dark round spots. How many there may be it is not possible to state, as the better the seeing the more of them seem to be. In spite, however, of their great numbers, there is no instance of one occurring unconnected with a canal. What is more, there is apparently none which does not lie at the junction of several canals. Most of these foci are about 120 miles in diameter, and appear most precisely circular when most clearly seen". Mr. Lowell calls them "oases" that are fertilised by water obtained from the canals, which he believes are of artificial construction.

The ultimate melting of the snow caps sets free an immense quantity of water, which causes the polar seas to overflow, thus giving rise to great inundations that extend over the surface of the planet as far as the tropics. These may to some extent account for the altered hue of certain portions of the surface of the planet, and also for the more distinct visibility of the canals; but no explanations can be given which will account for their duplication. There is much associated with these canals that needs elucidation. Dark areas, supposed to be seas, are traversed by them, and duplication appears to be dependent upon the sequence of the seasons. Professor Barnard, with the Lick telescope, observed a wealth of detail on the planet, "so intricate, small, and abundant that it baffled all attempts properly to delineate it". It was embarrassing to find these minute features belonging more characteristically to the "seas" than to the "continents".

It has been suggested that the canals are too minute to be visible, and that what we perceive are belts of vegetation that extend along their banks. Possibly such may be, but at present these canals constitute a perplexing problem.

Mars has an atmosphere—the formation of snow is indicative of its existence; but it is much more attenuated than that of the Earth, and it is improbable that there is any accumulation of cloud capable of producing rain in any quantity. The conclusion arrived at by Flammarion that "the general order of things is very different on Mars and on the earth" may be safely adopted.

The author of "The Riddle of Mars" believes he has solved the perplexing mystery associated with the natural phenomena and physical changes that take place on the planet Mars. He not only assumes that Mars is inhabited by beings who possess a high degree of intelligence, but that the Martians are very capable hydraulic engineers. He avers that "the difference in the precipitation of water vapour in the two worlds [the Earth and Mars] is the key to the riddle of Mars", and adds: "On the Earth, water, when evaporated into its air as water vapour, can again return in large quantities to its entire surface in the form of rain, hail, snow, sleet, and at its polar caps ice-spicules. On Mars it cannot now return probably anywhere, but is almost entirely precipitated at the polar caps, mainly in the form of ice spicules, but may be also as hail, snow, or sleet."

Notwithstanding the tenuity of the atmosphere of Mars, and the apparent absence of cloud in the planet's skies, it is very difficult to believe that whilst the aqueous vapour in the atmosphere is precipitated in the form of snow and ice at the poles, the equatorial and temperate regions of the planet, which alone are habitable for beings constituted like ourselves, should be

deprived of moisture from above, and that the aqueous element should be supplied by means of a vast system of waterways, pipes, and pumping stations constructed on a scale undreamt of on Earth.

The author devotes seven chapters to the elucidation of his theory—the circulation of water on Mars—and gives minute details with as much assurance as would lead one to imagine he had paid a prolonged visit to the planet. He first describes the colour-markings on Mars, and assumes that the blue-green areas are depressed ocean-beds covered with vegetation, but many capable observers of the planet regard them as seas and inlets sub-dividing continents. He next compares Mars with the Earth. Its atmosphere, physical features, surface-markings, and temperature are discussed and contrasted with those of our globe. Two chapters are devoted to "the flow of water on Mars and how it is utilised". The inundations caused by the melting polar snows spread over the level surface of the planet and in their onward career reach the depressed areas—"flowing through vast plains of existing vegetation". At this time "broad, ill-defined lines appear" that traverse the blue-green areas—channels that prevent the formation of large lakes. "The water flowing down the escape channels is, therefore, somehow spirited away in large quantities before it has time to collect into such lakes." The writer adds: "This could have, engineering experience suggests, been effected by pumping the water away from where it was collecting . . . to where it could be usefully utilised in the irrigation of crops or vegetation". Located at considerable intervals are pumping stations, at which the water is pumped up to high level reservoirs, from which it is distributed for irrigation purposes. The power is derived from the sun, although Mars receives but half the quantity of heat that reaches the Earth.

This irrigation system is one of stupendous magnitude, for the author calculates that the volume of water flowing from the melting snow at the south pole amounts to 10,000,000 cusecs, and that 120,000 pipes (he does not mention of what they are constructed), each six feet in diameter, are required to deal with the flow.

It is needless to give any more details regarding this audaciously speculative scheme that is unsupported by one trustworthy scientific fact. Mars without doubt is a very curious little world, and, if inhabited, the beings allotted there are as well adapted to their mode of existence as are those who live on the Earth.

#### THE PAIN OF GENIUS.

"Reminiscences of Tolstoy." By Count Ilya Tolstoy. Translated by George Calderon. Chapman and Hall. 10s. 6d. net.

YOU cannot understand Russia with your reason", wrote the poet Tchev; "you can only have faith in Russia". Perhaps it would save much useless speculation were we to apply these words to Tolstoy. That according to his own lights he was striving for good none can doubt, yet from reading these intimate records written by his son we can gather how difficult it was even for those who loved him best to add knowledge to devotion. Tolstoy can scarcely be approached as a man; more properly he can be regarded as a religion, and beneath every religion there is a substratum of mystery. Yet in regarding him as a prophet and preacher of a creed we must go warily. His so-called disciples were to him incomprehensible, and their ideas were further removed from his ideals than were those of any others he had met. If he rated anything lower than their intelligence it was his own literary work. "Anna Karénina" he described as vulgar and tedious, saying that he saw neither difficulty nor good in it. In vain Turgenev, who looked on him as a second Shakespeare, prayed him to labour with the pen, called to him from his death-bed that his gift was of God, hailing him as "great writer of our Russian soil".



Tolstoy could only see in the appeal the affectation of a man blinded by letters, and himself made hay and boots in place of books.

Count Ilya, for all his admiration, even adoration, of his father, often has to grope in the dark for keys to this strange life. The memories of childhood are, however, as free from problems as they are delightful. Tolstoy was in those days both the ideal father of a young family, joining in their games, stimulating their imaginations, and even organising their wildest romps, and also a simple country gentleman, riding, shooting, bathing, coursing, and taking all the open-air enjoyments of his kind. Few boys can have had a pleasanter, jollier, home than Count Ilya and the brothers and sisters nearest to him in age had at Yásnaya Polyána. He describes how, after the departure of some dull visitors they might all be sitting in listless, uncertain frame of mind, and then, up would jump the father, "lifting one hand in the air, and run at full speed round the table at a hopping gallop". All pursued him, until, panting and exhausted, they could sit down gay once more. The change in the home which followed Tolstoy's "conversion" brought pain to one and all. "He got gloomy and irritable, often quarrelled with my mother about trifles, and from our former jovial and high-spirited ring-leader and companion was transformed before our eyes into a stern and censorious propagandist." Two of the younger sons, who had none of the happy first impressions to bind them to their father, grew up wholly out of sympathy with his ideas, and one of them actually became a member of the "Black Hundred". It was not that Count Tolstoy wished to cast a gloom over his children's lives, but in his new dourness he could not help himself. A single look was enough to shatter their enjoyments. "He had not said anything, but he had thought it." The youngest child, who seems to have imbibed communistic notions with avid precocity, might have been the one real disciple, but the beloved Benjamin scarcely survived infancy.

Pity for all concerned rules the mind in reading some chapters of this book. Art, which to any other man with a tithe of his genius would have been a sure refuge, served this great writer not at all. Naturally there was an ever-increasing stream of pilgrims to visit the prophet of mystic nihilism, but, from Count Ilya's memories of them, we must conclude that a large number of them were either rogues or fools, and that very few, or none, were disciples such as his father desired. There was a Swede who lived the simple life to the point of indecency, and had to be turned out of the house; another individual who only fed on alternate days, and a person who took morphia and engaged to prove the truths of Christianity by mathematics. There were spies, too, civil and ecclesiastical, who mixed in the motley throng. It is easy to see how Tolstoy was forced more and more to live upon himself, receiving worship and affection, but scarcely sympathy. For years everything must have been driving towards the last strange act of his life—his disappearance from home. "He went away", says his son, "only as a choice of evils", thinking it preferable, it would seem, to sever many ties of love rather than to prolong the fret of constant compromise. Count Ilya is, however, far from being able to clear up the mystery of those last days. We can only realise that Tolstoy's flight was in some way the necessary consummation of his life.

Towards the end of the narrative the author mentions a partial decay in his father's memory, but it would almost certainly be wrong to conclude that the last episodes were merely due to mental aberration. The things he forgot were family affairs, such as his son's occupation and place of residence, but there was no faltering in any of the work he had set himself to do. We may hazard the conjecture that Tolstoy foresaw a deathbed in which he would be surrounded by all the care and comfort that wife and children could

devise for him, and made his plans to avoid what he conceived would be the final degradation of his theories. That he took with him a daughter and his medical attendant counts for little; they were simply necessary assistants in his scheme. After all, it is as idle to expect a full and reasonable solution of this problem in his life as of the many problems in the lives of the characters which he and other Russian writers have given us in their books. Turgenev and Dostoevsky, as well as Tolstoy himself, have made us acquainted with that state of mind which in their language is called "ochainie", and for which no dictionary can give us an equivalent. Its workings are complex beyond description. It may drive a bright young girl to the cloister or a quiet boy to murder. It is a national disease, said Melchior de Vogüé, in a country "where everything can be borne except the general lot". Thirty years before his death, it fell upon Tolstoy and tempted him to thoughts of suicide, and at the last it must have taken possession of him again. It is impossible to understand Tolstoy with the reason; it is clear that even his devoted son had but confidence in him. This at least is clear, that for the privilege of genius he paid in solitude and spiritual suffering. In all the later years of his life he lived imprisoned in his greatness. Grand and remote, towering above the common flock, he might well have stood for the Moise in Alfred de Vigny's immortal poem.

#### NOVELS.

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Landmarks are the events which we find have stuck in our memory after we have travelled a certain distance on life's road. Not necessarily intrinsically important or significant in themselves, it is only after we have passed them that we recognise the indelible impression they have left. As Mr. Lucas says, many things happen to us, often at the time apparently momentous, and generally interesting enough, which do not count. And it is strange how lasting can be the effect of what seem to be trivial occurrences and experiences: words, even lightly spoken by others, which fall on soil to that very instant prepared for them; casual wayside meetings, actions of total strangers, and so forth. It is not, therefore, the things that one would naturally expect to do so that stand out as landmarks in life. They may be spiritual events, the sudden realisation of or awakening to a great idea, or they may be mere material happenings. Why, the loan of a newspaper in a railway compartment may change a career! The subject is one which lends itself to Mr. Lucas's dexterous handling, availing himself as he does of accident and circumstance in the prosecution of deeper lines of observation. The book is, in fact, a characteristic Lucas production, and, in many ways, the best thing that has come from his prolific pen. Hardly a novel in the ordinary sense, it is rather a series of episodes, a record of the sensations and ideas of a sensitive but by no means unusual man. Its value lies in its ordinariness. Here we have no rare and precious emotions, but just the things which have happened to many of us in childhood, at school, in this sad or glad experience. Mr. Lucas has a peculiar intimacy of understanding. He keeps close to life, and rouses a sense of personal affection in the reader. He is at his best when he seems to be thinking aloud. And he writes with a quiet geniality and benignity, a delicate discrimination, as one who has found solace in the quieter things of life and is ready to hand on his secret to others.

**"The Witch." By Mary Johnston. Constable. 6s.**

HERE we have a historical novel in Miss Johnston's best vein. One wonders if in time to come the haze of centuries, the enchantment of distance will soften the present crisis in the same way that they have events of the seventeenth century. Elizabeth dying, unwillingly and arrogantly at Richmond, still able to sting even in the moment of dissolution, is a romantic and poignant memory, whereas to her immediate entourage she must have been a tiresome, cantankerous old woman.

The narrowness of the thought of the day, the persecution of so-called heretics—all these things become stirring events under Miss Johnston's imaginative pen, while at the time of their happening they were probably as ordinary and even dull in themselves as are our own County Council politics or May meeting speeches. "The Witch" is an admirable book over which to spend an hour of war forgetfulness. It inspires the hope that future novelists yet unborn will deal as picturesquely with the happenings of the twentieth century.

**LATEST BOOKS.****"Bernadotte: The First Phase." By D. Plunket Barton. Murray. 15s.**

Bernadotte was perhaps the one really formidable man in Napoleon's service. He alone of the Marshals was independent and unsubdued. His superb courage, audacious probity, and the necessity he was under by birth and temper to humble himself before no man made of him the *homme obstacle* of Napoleon's career. Napoleon knew his man at the first meeting—knew that here was a spirit he could never control by exercise of those arts which enabled him to secure the obedience and devotion of men like Soult or Berthier. There was always between Bernadotte and Napoleon a veiled hostility mingled with unfeigned respect. Napoleon admitted the qualities and services of Bernadotte with reluctance; Bernadotte approached the genius of Napoleon with misgiving. It was Bernadotte who, when Napoleon already grasped at supreme command of France, stared his defiance and assured Napoleon he would always defend the *Republic* against her enemies whether foreign

or domestic. Such a man was incorruptible and therefore dangerous. The author of this book tells very ably the tale of Bernadotte's early career, and we hope he will continue his study of this supremely interesting figure. We would like to see Bernadotte as King of Sweden treated with an equal care and sympathy. The story of Bernadotte is less grandiose in outline than the story of Napoleon. His genius has been quite put out by that of his Imperial master. But it is well worth the independent study which Mr. Plunket Barton has brought to it. He is a fascinating figure—this swaggering musketeer who became a king, keeping to the end his simplicity and innocence of pose.

**"The Letters of Fyodor Dostoevsky." Translated by Ethel Colburn Mayne. Chatto and Windus. 7s. 6d.**

These letters are a confirmation of all that English readers have imagined concerning the author of "The Idiot" and of "Crime and Punishment". Their prevailing inspiration is a poignant nationalism, a love for Holy Russia, which was proof against persecution and exile. His creed is declared in a letter to Strachov concerning a series of articles by Danilevsky. "I am not quite sure", Dostoevsky writes, "that Danilevsky will dwell with sufficient emphasis upon what is the inmost essence and the ultimate destiny of the Russian nation: namely, that Russia must reveal to the world her own Russian Christ, Whom as yet the peoples know not, and Who is rooted in our native Orthodox faith. There lies, as I believe, the essence of our vast impending contribution to civilisation, whereby we shall awaken the European peoples; there lies the inmost core of our exuberant and intense existence that is to be." It was Dostoevsky's nationalism which lay at the root of his antipathy for Turgenev. Turgenev preached German culture and affected to despise the achievements of his own countrymen. This attitude never ceased to inflame Dostoevsky. The relations of the two men are among the many interesting subjects illuminated by these letters, which have been most judiciously selected and most ably translated. They illustrate the character of Dostoevsky as a Christian patriot revealing in every line that "lovely goodness" which Stevenson so beautifully describes in him.

**"Coasting Bohemia." By J. Comyns Carr. Macmillan. 10s. 6d. net.**

The papers comprised in this volume, though, as their author says, following no sort of ordered plan, together serve to give an admirable idea of life in the world of art during the latter part of the last century. Mr. Comyns Carr has many interesting recollections of painters, writers, actors, and musicians, and he has done well to put them on permanent record. Though an unashamed critic, he has here attempted little in the way of an estimate of their work, his object having been rather to give us a glimpse of the men he knew than of their work. It means much that he can take us right into the presence of such giants as Whistler and Meredith, and every crumb of information he gives on their personality is to be received with gratitude. The author's attempt to disparage the modern artist's striving for originality needs, on the other hand, to be treated with less respect. Vigorously as he states his case, it is altogether unconvincing, and we do not doubt that the shades of many old rebels regard with amused approval the efforts of their young successors in Bohemia to set up a new throne with every lustre. To imagine anything else is simply to deny a sense of humour to the departed. There are places in Mr. Carr's book where his wit sparkles, but there are others where it seems to have gone to sleep.

**"The Inner Life of the Royal Academy." By G. D. Leslie, R.A. Murray. 10s. 6d. net.**

The Academy is not what it was; its old prestige is diminished; its "natural enemies", as Mr. Leslie calls them, cry loudly at the gates. Mr. Leslie loyally does his best for his party, and even becomes mildly cross about the newspaper critics and irresponsible men who in 1905 testified against the Chantrey Fund administration. To academicians it is immaterial that the Chantrey Collection Room at Millbank is known as the "Chamber of Horrors". Another controversial point touched on by Mr. Leslie is the teaching in the R.A. schools. His amiable conclusion is "if a tree is to be judged by its fruits . . . it cannot be denied that the R.A. schools, carried on as they were originally started, have been very successful in their results". Started in a decadent canon-bound period, the schools have remained conventional and inanimate. Their "successful" results are that no typical medal-winning student has ever become a considerable artist save in cases (such as Millais's) where the student survived in spite of his Academy training. Of recent years none has survived. To the thoroughly saturated academician even the smallest academy beer is apparently important. We find it difficult to be interested in accounts of how the academy conducts its meetings, ballots, and prize-givings. On the other hand, it is something to know that pretty girls make the best students, and that Royal Academicians are so gallant (we had almost said "such dogs") as to give pretty students decidedly more attention than their plainer companions.



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